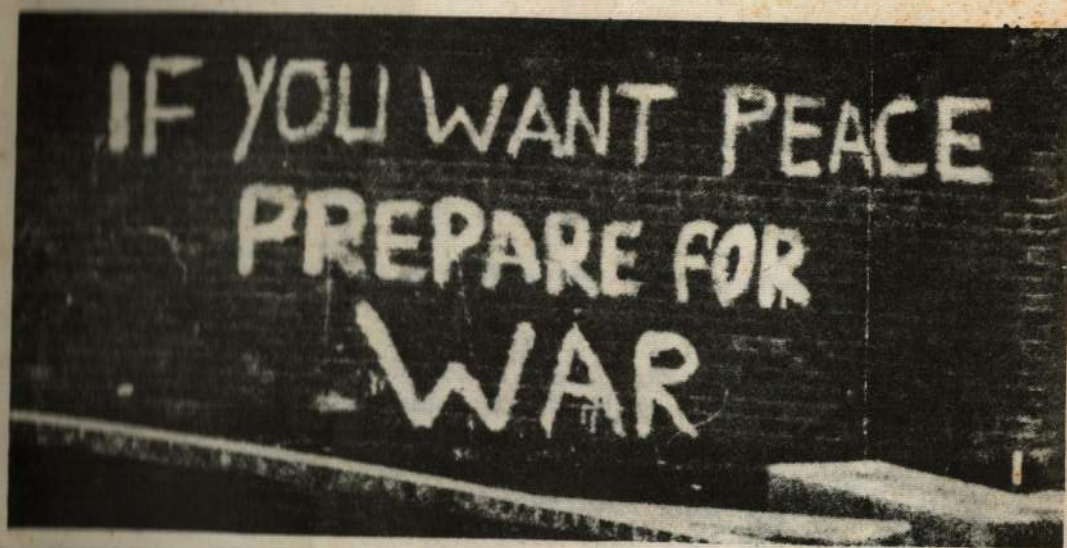


I WILL THE STROKE NEWINGTON  
EIGHT CELEBRATE 17th IN PRISON







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# 1 WILL THE STOKE NEWINGTON EIGHT CELEBRATE 1984 IN PRISON

As the class war hots up, the state increasingly turns its attention to putting down its political opponents. Legal repression becomes the order of the day. The political police are given a free hand; tougher laws are passed; blatantly political charges like "conspiracy" and "incitement" are suddenly the rage; sentencing becomes more and more vindictive.

Singled out for special attention is "public enemy number one" - the Angry Brigade. The state has shown it will stop at nothing to find someone guilty of belonging to it. Already they have made a victim of Jake Prescott - although acquitted of actually causing explosions Jake was convicted on a charge of conspiracy to cause explosions. The evidence against him was incredibly thin, consisting of his having admitted to addressing in his undisguised handwriting three envelopes without knowing that they were going to be used to post copies of one Angry Brigade communique. For this the judge sentenced him to a savage 15 years.

But the Prescott/Purdie trial was only a dress-rehearsal for an even bigger trial. This June eight militants are in the dock at the Old Bailey facing charges intended to expose them as the nucleus of the Angry Brigade. The Stoke Newington Eight conspiracy trial will be the biggest show trial yet.



What is the left doing about this trial, already begun at the Old Bailey? Their response to the Prescott/Purdie conspiracy trial was woeful. A "serious failing on the part of the revolutionary movement in Britain", a Red Mole editorial was candid enough to call it. Despite a few occasional and token paragraphs about solidarity and the need to "attack and expose all the Old Bailey frame-ups", the left is still sitting tight. It seems set on repeating the same errors committed over the issue of the Prescott/Purdie trial. What is needed is active solidarity aimed at extending the struggle beyond the totally unreal confines of the courtroom. What we are getting is a half-hearted solidarity. Comrades seem to concentrate on raising doubts: What are the politics of the Angry Brigade? Do the Stoke Newington Eight include any members of the Angry Brigade? Are any of the Eight guilty of the charges against them? Can the left actively defend unaligned militants?

Such doubts are out of place here. They should be absolutely irrelevant to the question of active solidarity with those presently facing trial. Revolutionary solidarity should embrace all those on the left who become victims of state persecution, whether innocent or guilty, whether bombers or not. The state assault on the Stoke Newington Eight is part of a general campaign of legal repression. If the state wins in this case





it will consider victory in future political trials a matter of course. If the state can effectively silence our eight then not a single revolutionary can escape the blame. What is really on trial is the state's ability to railroad who it likes, when it likes, no matter what the evidence. In the Eight's own words, "We are the harbingers of the coming storm and the treatment we receive is the foretaste for all who stand in their way". They are up for trial because they resisted.

There is a further special reason for giving solidarity to the 8. Their resistance involved them in identifying themselves as militant opponents of the system. All of them were active in different sections of the movement- their involvement covers things as diverse as Claimants Unions, Women's Liberation, Gay Liberation, tenants and squatters campaigns, radical student politics, experiments in communal living, international organising in defence of political prisoners.

But here ironically we touch on the root reason for the left disquiet about giving solidarity. The majority of the left reject Angry Brigade politics as they understand them. But they also recognise that both the Angry Brigade and the Stoke Newington 8 identify themselves as members of the libertarian





left and repudiate orthodox or straight socialist politics. Behind the left disquiet lies the whole question of what is the revolutionary movement in this country.

The relevance of this larger question means that it's not enough for the straight left to raise the question of solidarity for itself solely in terms of asking what is the *Angry Brigade's* part in the movement. Its ideological assumptions about the revolutionary movement and its development make such terms far too narrow. The straight left also needs to ask what is *its* part in the movement. Like it or not, the straight left must face up to the fact that many recent developments have arisen quite independently of it and have also been in part hostile to it - e.g. Women's Liberation critique of leadership and hierarchy on the left; Claimants Union resistance to centralised left organisational patterns.

So long as the left does 'nt respond to these and other similar developments in a self-critical manner, the problem of solidarity with those who don't accept its particular set of lines will recur and recur. So long as the left feels it has nothing to learn from either the Angry Brigade or the Stoke Newington 8 no real debate can take place. The libertarian left needs to be listened to, not spoken at. Instead of responding with a prefabricated line on "terrorist adventurers" (taken straight from the pages of Lenin or Trotsky), the left must also develop a live and concrete analysis about such groups as the Angry Brigade, an analysis which must also involve the questioning of the left's *own* praxis.

The left must ask itself: how far do we want to enter into a dialogue with the Angry Brigade? How prepared are we for illegal structures? How much do we see our own tactics and strategy in terms of present realities? If these issues continue to be skirted, only the state will benefit.

Is there a way through? Judging from what has appeared in print, the straight left is only slightly less mystified by "terror", "armed struggle", "urban guerrillas", "bombers", etc. than the overground press. For most of us such terms conjure up highly sinister and specialised vocations that are exclusive of any other activities. Thus "armed struggle" conjures up professional soldiers, "bombers" conjures up people - always 'mad' - with a stick of gelignite constantly in their pockets, "urban guerrillas" conjures up a highly organised military vanguard with complex hierarchy and networks. The way we use these terms is INCREDIBLY MYSTIFIED. And by failing to develop any clear analysis of our own we repeatedly fall back on the state's perspective, implicitly giving our consent to it.



## 2 THE ANGRY BRIGADE AS "TERRORISTS", "URBAN GUERRILLAS" ETC.

The slogans and stereotypes have been thicker on the ground than the bombs and bullets ever were. Let's look at some of them and show why they are unconvincing as they stand.

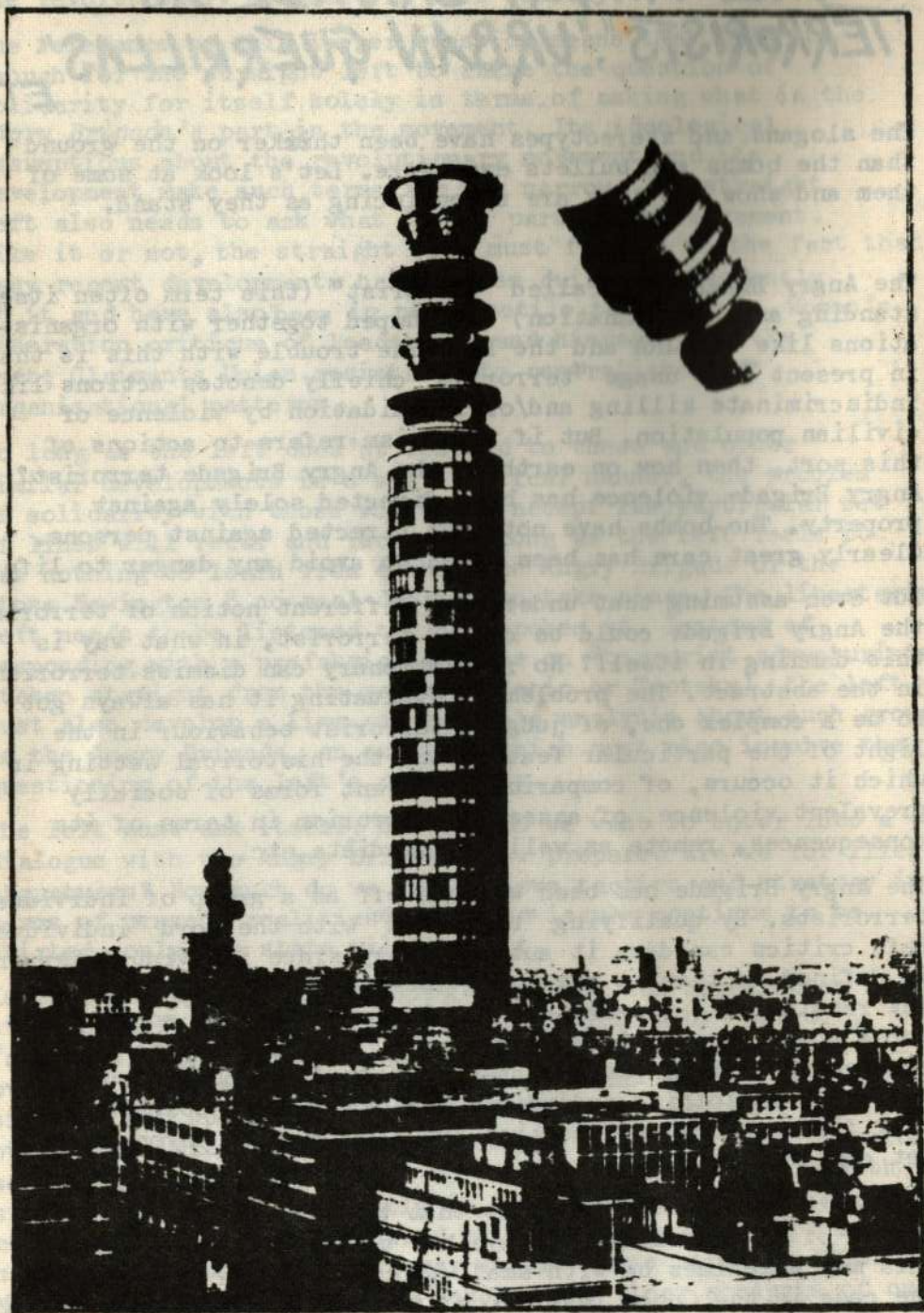
The Angry Brigade is called "terrorist" (this term often itself standing as a condemnation) and lumped together with organisations like the IRA and the FLQ. The trouble with this is that in present left usage "terrorism" chiefly denotes actions like indiscriminate killing and/or intimidation by violence of civilian population. But if terrorism refers to actions of this sort, then how on earth is the Angry Brigade terrorist? Angry Brigade violence has been directed solely against property. The bombs have not been directed against persons. Clearly great care has been taken to avoid any danger to life.

But even assuming that under some different notion of terrorism the Angry Brigade could be called terrorist, in what way is this damning in itself? No revolutionary can dismiss terrorism in the abstract. The problem of evaluating it has always got to be a complex one, of judging terrorist behaviour in the light of the particular features of the historical setting in which it occurs, of comparing different forms of socially prevalent violence, of assessing terrorism in terms of its consequences, remote as well as immediate, etc.

The Angry Brigade has been written off as a group of individual terrorists. By qualifying "terrorism" with the word "individual" left critics can damn it automatically since individual terrorism is defined by them as something isolated from the backbone of any revolution - the masses. But in fact it's not so simple. For a start the criticism plays very heavily on myths around nineteenth century propaganda-by-the-deed anarchists such as Ravachol, exploiting prejudices against them to obscure not only *their* theory and practice but also that of anyone they get compared with.

Second the criticism overlooks that the arming of the revolution always has to begin somewhere and this may sometimes be with small groups of guerrillas, as was the case in the Cuban revolution. Armed groups only deserve to be condemned as individual if they fail to develop and forge







organic links with other struggles. And whether such development takes place or not depends in part on the whole left movement and the support (critical and/or active) it gives to violent tactics. The vital thing is not how many people are involved in an actual bombing campaign but how much they are attuned to what is happening on the broad front: if they are attuned then their violence can express and complement others' actions and ideas and be part of the whole. The test is not who, and how may do a particular action, but how effectively does the action fit in with other offensives.

Finally we must remember that the left typically take the opposite of "individual" to be "mass", and that condemning something as "individual" is their way of promoting the politics of the mass. But this "individual"/"mass" polarity is a false one. It both assumes that the mass is passive (requiring to be lead) and accepts this fact uncritically. It is consequently dismissive for no good reason of other forms of collective actions such as autonomous working-class actions or actions by claimants or gay people.

The Angry Brigade is condemned for being elitist and anti-democratic: it is seen as a self-appointed band of saviours arrogating to itself the rights of decision-making in the revolutionary process without submitting its course of actions to the test of approval and adoption by the working masses. But the standard reasons used to support this criticism just won't wash. For these presuppose that revolutionaries are only such if they accept a single source of decision-making. This ignores that revolutionary decision-making is more creative when diffused and many-centred. This at least is what follows if you think that revolution is about people getting together to take control of their own lives and learning to take decisions for themselves. And just think what the idea of "submitting the course of action to the tests of approval...by the working masses" might mean in the present context, especially given that all *existing* machineries for ascertaining working-class views are external and bureaucratic. Would there have been a major strike if the miners had waited for approval by a majority of the rest of British workers? Such an idea in the present context would be a recipe for passivity.

The central error at work in much of the left's thinking about the Angry Brigade is that about the existence of a monolithic movement. However, there is no unified movement, and no group has the right to call itself *the* movement. There is rather a series of actions and networks existing at different levels. Once the idea of a single



entity called the movement is given up it also becomes necessary to re-examine fixed ideas about what constitutes bona fide militancy. There seems a peculiar reluctance on the part of the left to accept that the Angry Brigade weren't trying to set themselves up as representatives of the movement. They were rather responding to their own real oppressions which they shared with numberless others. If the Angry Brigade had been a bunch of militant miners, would we find the same left insensibility?

Critics who are quicker with labels than analyses have condemned the Angry Brigade for their apparent secrecy, for being isolated and conspiratorial. The secrecy criticism is more often than not a red herring and a very stupid one at that. If people are still worried about being "in the know" (who did it, what will they do next, when will they do it?), they haven't grasped the fact that whether or not the tactic revolutionaries employ at any given time is legal or illegal, the revolution is illegal. It follows that in certain contexts activities such as bombing and sabotage must be surrounded by very tight security. This is the case at present.

The illegality of bombing enforces a certain kind of isolation on the Angry Brigade, in the sense that it cannot openly work with other groups, share or coordinate actions. Or at least the idea that it could is inconceivable at the present moment in England. That does not mean it will always be so, (the IRA in Free Derry doesn't have this particular problem...), nor that the actions of the Angry Brigade have no bearing on what other people might be doing. But the responsibility for making this sort of interaction fully effective is two-way: the Angry Brigade needs to make its actions expressive and back them up with as much explanation as possible; and people using other means of struggle must show some response to the tactic - whether hostile or not, but at least a recognition that the Angry Brigade is part of the movement and that what it does is relevant. For without this recognition the Angry Brigade will be effectively isolated (as has been the case up till now), as a person whose letters are unanswered is isolated.

To call the Angry Brigade "conspiratorial" conjures up the picture of a group bent on imposing its own ends on people. But the Angry Brigade aren't manipulative in this sense. Of course the state sees the Angry Brigade as a "conspiracy", but then it is unable to tolerate the idea of a movement coming



together in any other terms than that of sinister groups perversely working for their own ends. This is how it interprets every left action; this is how it explains its every setback (e.g. Carr's talk of "small but virulent minorities in our midst" after the miners' victory). This is how the state sees all "ends" other than its exploitative own.

The Angry Brigade is seen as setting itself up as a substitute for mass action. But none of their actions make sense seen this way. All of them were intended to complement mass struggles, on the industrial and other fronts. Their exemplary actions against symbolic targets are clearly meant to parallel mass actions (e.g. Carr's home was bombed on the same day as a large march against the Industrial Relations Bill), as well as to demonstrate the possibility of a new style of collective struggle.

The Angry Brigade is decried as "adventurist". Lying behind this charge is the view that revolutionary armed struggle in Britain is inappropriate except during the final phase of revolution when the material preconditions are right. Once however you accept the need for revolutionary armed struggle at some stage (even if only in the final phase), then you must accept the need to prepare for it NOW. This is the main tenet of all modern guerrilla theory and practice. To cite a recent formulation given by the Red Army Faction, a contemporary West German urban guerrilla group: "Urban guerrilla warfare is based on the analysis...that when conditions will be ripe for armed struggle, it will be too late to prepare for it".

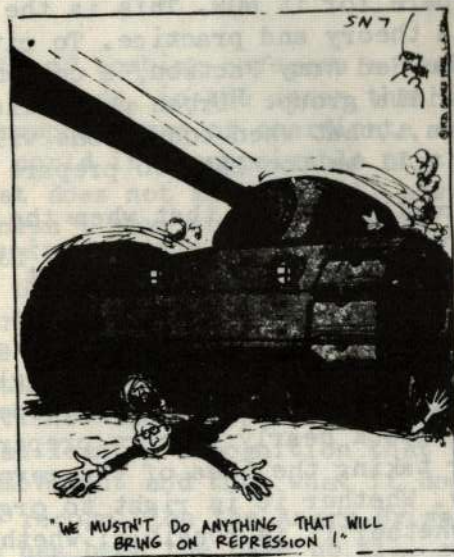
So we ask you: do you really believe that when the revolutionary offensive reaches the point where the state physically confronts it totally, that armed resistance will appear out of the sky? Well we don't, so we can't dismiss the Angry Brigade on the a priori grounds that their use of revolutionary violence has been premature. Maybe the type of armed struggle they have chosen is ill-conceived, maybe they should have spent longer preparing (the Tupamaros took nearly 7 years preparing), but we cannot condemn them for taking the idea of the revolution arming itself seriously. Whether it is right to organised armed resistance depends on whether it is possible; whether it is possible can only be found out in practice. Actions change the situation we are fighting in and the tactics we use.

In any case we cannot accept the idea of armed struggle as a stage or self-contained phase. This is one-dimensional. Armed struggle only makes sense when pursued alongside other non-military forms of struggle. Once this is grasped, then obviously there will be contexts in which armed struggle groups can't take the place of legal left organisations; single armed actions cannot



replace ongoing class struggle; bombs and other tactics of the urban guerrilla can't replace agitation/subversion/building alternative structures on the industrial front and in the communities.

Angry Brigade actions are written off as counter-productive on the grounds that they supplied the state with a pretext for increased repression. But we all know that the state can as easily invent as discover a pretext for escalating repression (this is what happened in Italy recently) and that its repressive response is more often than not completely out of proportion to the immediate or remote threat any action represents. As a rule escalation of class war repression occurs independently of what any section of the left does. The basic manoeuvres of the ruling class are dictated by the changing patterns of capitalism. Given a choice, the British ruling class would obviously prefer rule by repressive tolerance to the present unstable state of affairs. But such a luxury is excluded by the overriding needs of the system here - to increase profits, raise productivity, curb industrial and community militancy, etc. The intensification of repression is inevitable as soon as the working class starts fighting back.



Looking at the criticism more closely we need to ask what kind of repression actually resulted from the Angry Brigade's practice, and who has been affected? The countless raids, arrests, detentions, phonetappings and



railroadings in court were almost exclusively directed against the libertarian and unaligned sections of the left ( Women's Liberation, Claimants Unions, political communes, underground bookshops and the underground press). Has the effect on these areas been counter-productive?

The people directly affected are the very ones who have learnt most. There is now a recognition that we are not taking our struggle seriously if we are not prepared for surveillance, raids, etc. It is perhaps a sad comment, but security consciousness of the ruthlessness of our rulers and their bloodhounds only comes after reaction has started. But reaction fortunately doesn't come as a single blow, and there are plainly more blows to come. We learn from yesterday's repression how to deal with what undoubtedly will be heavier repression from now on.

Thus organising around courts and prisons is starting to take concrete shape. We are now much more aware of how to defend ourselves as we fight, now and in the future. There is also a growing two-way process between these sections and people coming up against the law in general. Not just the class conscious defendant, not just the "political" con, but defendants and cons everywhere. The knowledge gained is getting applied to every attempt at class self-organising.

But even if the people involved had not been able to turn repression to their own advantage - if there had been a much more severe attack on the libertarian sections of the movement as a result of the bombings - would this in itself be the ruin of the Angry Brigade? Is the left never prepared to adopt a particular tactic if it entails escalation? (And that tactic needn't be bombing: consider civil rights movements at particular moments of history). Is it content to remain a purely reactive force, even when the state is on the verge of introducing Emergency Powers Acts here and using its army against its own people? (How many Derrys will it take till...)

None of these remarks are intended to excuse the Angry Brigade from some criticism. We are trying to clear the way for criticism made on a realistic, unmechanical basis. The above sort of arguments don't wash because they pose a false set of alternatives: either totally isolated individual terror or revolution lead by a vanguard party. But it is untrue that people are only revolutionaries if they devote themselves to building a revolutionary party. People getting themselves together, outside the embrace of parties, to fight oppression



are also revolutionaries. Consistently applied, the straight left approach dismisses not only all autonomous rank and file action on the part of the working class, but also the efforts of so-called "marginal" groups like women, blacks, claimants, schoolkids, gays to organise and fight around their own specific oppressions. And whether our comrades like it or not, these struggles are just as crucial as those taking place in the industrial sphere. So we reject the idea that our revolution has to be preceded by a long process of forming a mass party according to a fixed agenda of stages. And we have no time for any vanguard or avant-garde which sees itself as having seen a light which they are duty-bound to bring down to the masses.



"THE DIALECTIC IS NOT THROUGH  
A MAJORITY TO REVOLUTION, BUT  
THROUGH REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS  
TO A MAJORITY."

The body of Rosa Luxemburg, dragged from a canal in March 1919, three weeks after her murder. The reality-principle is not quite over...



### 3 THE DEED AND THE SPECTACLE

"These guerrillas are the violent activists of a revolution comprising workers, students, teachers, trade unionists, homosexuals, unemployed and women striving for liberation. They are all angry..."

(Evening Standard editorial, "The red badge of revolution creeping across Britain," Dec., 1971)

How are the Angry Brigade to be viewed then? Where have they failed? Where have they succeeded?

The Angry Brigade doesn't see its bombs as likely to win the class war by themselves. Its actions are exemplary, designed on the one hand to expose the vulnerability of the ruling class, to enter the homes of the rulers and show they have no clothes, and on the other hand to show the possibility of the revolution arming itself.

Nor are the bombs sabotage acts whose validity lies in destroying something difficult or impossible to replace. Rather, they are symbolic, and for symbolism to work it must be clear and intelligible. Here has been the main failure of the Angry Brigade to date - its propaganda, the way it explains itself. The propaganda can be broken down into three aspects: the act itself (the target, the timing, the type of bomb, etc.); the vehicle for distributing written propaganda; and the content of that propaganda.

Only in some cases were the bombings self-explanatory. For example, the choice of Robert Carr's house as a target at a time when there was large-scale opposition to his Industrial Relations Bill. The meaning of other of its bombings is not so obvious, and consequently could be easily misunderstood or, at best, diluted in its impact by being expressed solely in supportive written propaganda.

The vehicle of distribution chosen for the communiques was at first the establishment press which was of course free to suppress or edit and distort as it chose. In trying to use the press the Angry Brigade might have gained in number of "readers" but lost all control over its material. If, as happened, the press was directed to suppress news of the bombings, it would obviously also suppress the communiques. Apart from the practicalities



there is something fundamentally wrong in turning to a medium which habitually manipulates to preserve ruling interests. (From August 1971 onwards, however, the communiques have been sent to underground newspapers and radical groups, as an attempt to escape this contradiction)

The communiques can also be criticised for their content. Their effect has been badly limited by an oblique, didactic, assertive style. The bravado was too sheer ("we are slowly destroying the long tentacles of the oppressive state machine"); the attacks on other sections of the left too splenetic (I.S., for example, was equated with the C.P. and Robert Carr!)

And then there are the undeniable touches of romanticism and fatalism, which have distorted their own practice (they aren't in fact individual terrorists) and blinkered their conception of how to build a durable base for organised violence. Collective action has been seen in very limited terms - as a series of isolated acts of heroism and self-sacrifice, i.e. things that of their nature can only be exceptional and sporadic. "We are prepared to die for the revolution", they boast in one communique - what might have been a realistic confrontation of the dangers reads instead as a fatalistic posturing because it resolves the confrontation by death, not by working out how to survive. Talk of death directly contradicts emphasis on the realization of desires as a revolutionary motivation and objective.

Despite viewing themselves as libertarians against all external structures and for control from below the Angry Brigade frequently lapsed into depicting themselves as a vanguard along the lines of a marxist urban guerrilla group. This isn't the sort of failing the straight left is very sensitive to, but it definitely has confined the Angry Brigade's potential. The communiques don't say much about connections between bombings and less dramatic tactics, and this gives the impression that the Angry Brigade dismisses anything short of bombs as ineffective - the impression, "We know, we've got the means and we'll do it for you or show you how".

So far the Angry Brigade has used a very limited form of guerrilla tactics, almost exclusively bombings. This has created the impression that they see no value in tactics which intrinsically involve people outside of themselves, e.g. ways of redistributing wealth by bank robberies or hijacking lorries, etc.

So they tend to appear as a specialist expert group, zapping in with a bomb and zapping out again...

How successful, then, has been the attempt to pierce the spectacle and strip the emperors? While they shock most people, the Angry Brigade do appeal to an indeterminate



number of people on at least one level—the level at which people respond passionately to symbols that are meaningful to them. But this success only confirms the Angry Brigade's failure in its own terms. Emotional solidarity at a distance cannot be confounded with active backing for their actions. It is rather the emotional response of passive spectators who have no intention of getting into the ring. Instead of smashing the spectacle, the Angry Brigade has complemented capitalist spectacle with radical spectacle. Support has come from consumers, not producers, of violence.

Before considering what can be seen as positive about the Angry Brigade, we first need to dispense here and now with one particularly chronic left mystification: its double-standard concerning illegality. It's apparently O.K. to squat, attack police on a demo, hurl a CS gas canister in the House of Commons, picket, occupy, etc. But as soon as you use a bomb (even against property solely) you forfeit, it seems, your identity as a socialist. There is no justification for this double-standard. Planting bombs is just one form of illegal direct action among many others. If one thinks of illegal direct action as a continuum ranging from non-violent to violent, then throwing bombs at property belongs alongside other activities such as industrial sabotage, stoning the army, trashing or petrol-bombing schools/army recruitment centres, etc. It doesn't even belong very near the far extreme of this continuum, as any comparison with IRA actions rapidly makes clear.

Considered as just one form of illegal direct action, what can be seen as positive about the Angry Brigade bombings?

If we begin by looking at the bombings as a whole we see that they pinpoint two highly sensitive areas of struggle. First the area of working class and industrial struggle; the bombing of the Dept. of Employment and Productivity on the day of a large demonstration against the Industrial Relations Bill; the bombing of Carr's house on the day of an even larger demonstration; the bombing of William Batty's home during a Ford strike at Dagenham the bombing of John Davies', Minister of Trade and Industry, during the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders crisis; the bombing of Bryant's home during a strike at one of his building works.

Complementing the attacks in this area are bombings aimed directly at the repressive apparatus of the state during a time of snowballing repression. The bombing of the home of Commissioner Waldron, head of Scotland Yard. The bombing of the police computer at Tintagel House ("police computers can't tell the truth, they merely record our crimes"). Bombing the home of Peter Rawlinson,





Attorney General, overseer of judicial repression. And finally the bombing of a Territorial Army Recruitment Centre in Holloway just after internment was introduced in Northern Ireland and the army publicity campaign aimed at working-class youth was reaching saturation-point. There have also been two bombings that point to a third, as yet less developed, area of struggle,



concerning in the main the women's movement, that around the *spectacle*, the leisure merchants, the institutions that create and manipulate our desires. The bombing of the BBC van the night before the Miss World contest, also the night before the first militant collective action by women against the contest. The bombing at Biba's, the high boutique that sells off the peg trends, images and roles to women and men.



We hear a lot of left discussion about violence, but we rarely stop to remember what ruling class ideologists think about it. One of their representatives (Critchley) very revealingly asserts that England more than any other country has managed to cloak its violent history in "an ideology of tranquillity". His recent book, piously called *The Conquest of Violence* is a torrent of praise for the tranquillisation of militancy. But the drug's effects are beginning to wear off. This brand of ideology has been delivered a sharp shock by the Angry Brigade. Along with the miners and many other groups of militants, the Angry Brigade is reminding us that social freedom is something we must take for ourselves, by violence if necessary. In a society where it has become almost second nature to dismiss violence as irrational and to regard all passions connected with it as beyond the pale - this reminder has a shattering effect. The mass-pickets, the occupations, the increasing use in general of direct action by both the organised working **class** and "marginal" groups, reveal that all of a sudden **ANGER** has become an acceptable political passion. The Angry Brigade are only one brigade of the angry. The state is **discovering** that the numbers of the **ANGRY** are countless.

To repeat the words of the immortal *Evening Standard* editorial which appeared just after the Prescott/Purdie trial outcome, "These guerrillas are the violent activists of a revolution comprising workers, students, teachers, trade unionists, homosexuals, unemployed and women striving for liberation. They are all angry...". The "red badge of revolution creeping across Britain" is not just a phantasy of the yellow press.

Admittedly the Angry Brigade itself only received solidarity from the ranks of the angry on an emotional level (as we said earlier). But while emotional solidarity is no sound basis for present action, it can be for future actions (revolutionaries must learn to look beyond the immediate effects of bombings).

When later struggles arise, earlier actions that at the time seemed shocking can suddenly seem prescient. Consider the Angry Brigade Territorial Army Centre bombing in the light of the subsequent spate of army recruitment centre trashings and bombings in protest against the latest Bloody Sunday at Derry. And how do the bombings directed against the Industrial Relations Bill and other Tory atrocities look to rank and file working class now that "their" trade union bosses are instructing them that even bad laws must be obeyed while they remain on the Statute book? They may not see the point in emulating the bombing, but what about the direct action, and what about the illegality?



## 4 BEATING LEGALITY-FETISHISM

'...a moment of terror. Also it flashed through your mind that all those supporters of Ian and Jake and indignant hippies might have a point after all....' (account in recent Rebel of Special Branch raid on one of 60 addresses after the Aldershot bombing).

The left must urgently revise its attitude to legality and illegality. Our respect for the law should never be more than a tactical consideration, for to endorse legality in any other way is to endorse everyday injustice, everyday repression, everyday exploitation (not only in the workplace, but in the S.S. office, the school, the family etc). Legality is a question of power, and the Rule of Law is the cornerstone of capitalist domination. It is nothing but a public code defining what the society is and how it is to be run. It is enforced on everyone, and where necessary, is enforced by the physical power of the police, courts and prisons. Respect for the Law means respect for the present structure of society. While the legal code has the backing of the police etc, most of the time this apparatus does not have to be called into effect for it is maintained by people's consent. Consent and respect therefore perform precisely the same function as the police -hence the phrase, 'policeman in the head'. There is no detached, neutral position.

But despite recognition of these facts on a theoretical level, in practice, the left suffers from a legality fetish. They support working class militants when massive pickets are mounted, but lose interest when select numbers of them pass through the courts. They offer no concrete help to the rising numbers of working class kids who have no alternative but to live outside the law.

They can openly exhort workers to resist illegally, but fall short of analysing their own organisation in a similar light. When the pigs start raiding their homes and offices, they restrict themselves to polite protest through legal channels.



They get illegally busted on legal demonstrations, plead guilty and go quietly in the courts. Imprisoned comrades get forgotten. By centralising information on their organisation and activities, it only takes a few raids for the pigs to learn all about them.

At the same time, as the state whips up hysteria about the need to respect the Rule of Law, it increasingly employs illegalisation of resistance (i.e. thinks up a new law to outlaw previously legal activities) as a technique of class warfare. Witness the recent moves against the railmen's work-to-rule and dockers blacking of containers. It is building up a counter-revolutionary apparatus of repression. It is contracting the present legal space permitted to resisters. What faith in these circumstances can the left have in legality when it sees the state on the one hand hurriedly legalising its own illegalities (the Bill on troop presence in Northern Ireland rushed through Westminster in less than a day) and on the other hand, brazenly abusing its own laws dealing with workers' contracts, claimants' **benefits**, people's rights on arrest, detention, interrogation etc?

In the face of these attacks, to confine oneself to purely reactive, NCCL **protest** can at most only slow down this process. The state means business, even if the left, as a whole, doesn't. In respecting legality, they underestimate the apparatus of repression, and consequently cannot respond to repression by organising resistance. To rely in these circumstances on the state continuing to allow us the luxury of legal room to move, is naive. It is idiotic to wait for illegalisation as a blow of fate from the system.

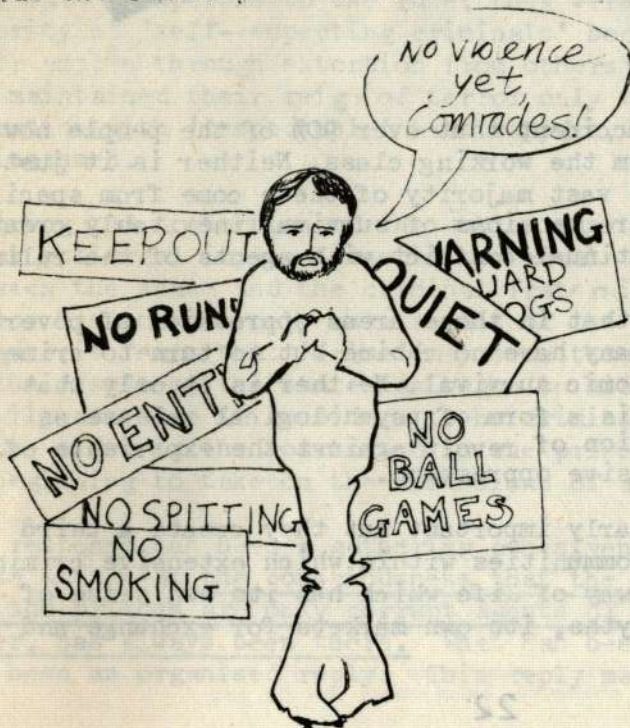
This is where the SN8 trial, and other political trials come in. What happened to Prescott, and what is in danger of happening to the SN8, cannot be dismissed as isolated acts of repression against maverick sections of the left. The present large-scale operations of persecution which have been going on for the past two years only make sense as an exercise in CONTAINMENT. They are intended as a deterrent against any sort of active resistance undertaken by people on the left, inside or outside left parties. In this process the state is also training and preparing its police and armed forces for struggles that will come if containment fails. The message is plain: left protest is alright so long as it is one step behind. As soon as it takes the initiative, as soon as protest turns into an offensive, the left must reckon on



the state doing all it can to jail the revolution. (At the end of the Prescott/Purdie trial, the judge Melford Stevenson defined conspiracy for the jury thus; "to cause such disruption to the ordinary agencies of law as to be grievously damaging to the society in which we live." That crime is committed every single time a militant socialist actively starts to put what he believes into action.)

The A.B.'s campaign of bombings is part of an upsurge of militancy in this country. Many may continue to disagree with their particular expression of militancy (through bombings) but all of us must consider the general lesson their experiment is yielding. All those who undertake active resistance & struggle must expect illegalisation. Since the state can define active resistance how it likes, its crazy to think you are immune. It is now not necessary to look outside this country to find cases where writing a leaflet is considered a criminal offence; Mike Tobin is presently serving a 2-year sentence in Chelmsford Prison for possession of leaflets which "incited members of the armed forces to disaffection".

The straight left is itself already being labelled as a "virulent minority". Unless it retreats it must anticipate that it too will be labelled "criminal", even "terrorist". When the state is set on illegalisation, the left must begin to think about creating conditions for revolutionary struggle outside the legality of the state.





## 5 REVOLUTIONARY CRIMINALITY



It is clearly no accident that over 90% of the people now in prison come from the working class. Neither is it just by chance that the vast majority of these come from specific urban ghettos where tensions of survival inevitably create a situation of continual conflict with agents of the ruling class.

It is not just that in these areas oppression of poverty is so great that many have no choice but to turn to crime as a means of economic survival. Neither is it only that criminal activity is a form of psychological release as well as an expression of revolt against the experience of unending and extensive oppression.

Both these are clearly important but they create a third factor: criminal communities within which extensive criminal networks evolve a way of life which has its own sense of history, its own myths, its own markets for exchange and



its own cultural dynamic, itself based on continuing conflict with the Law. It is far more than just a response to prevailing material conditions, it is far too widespread and diverse to **have** any overall coherence and sense of total organisation. It is much more of a diffuse network within which differing small groups of people develop their own specialities and usually stick to them for many years.

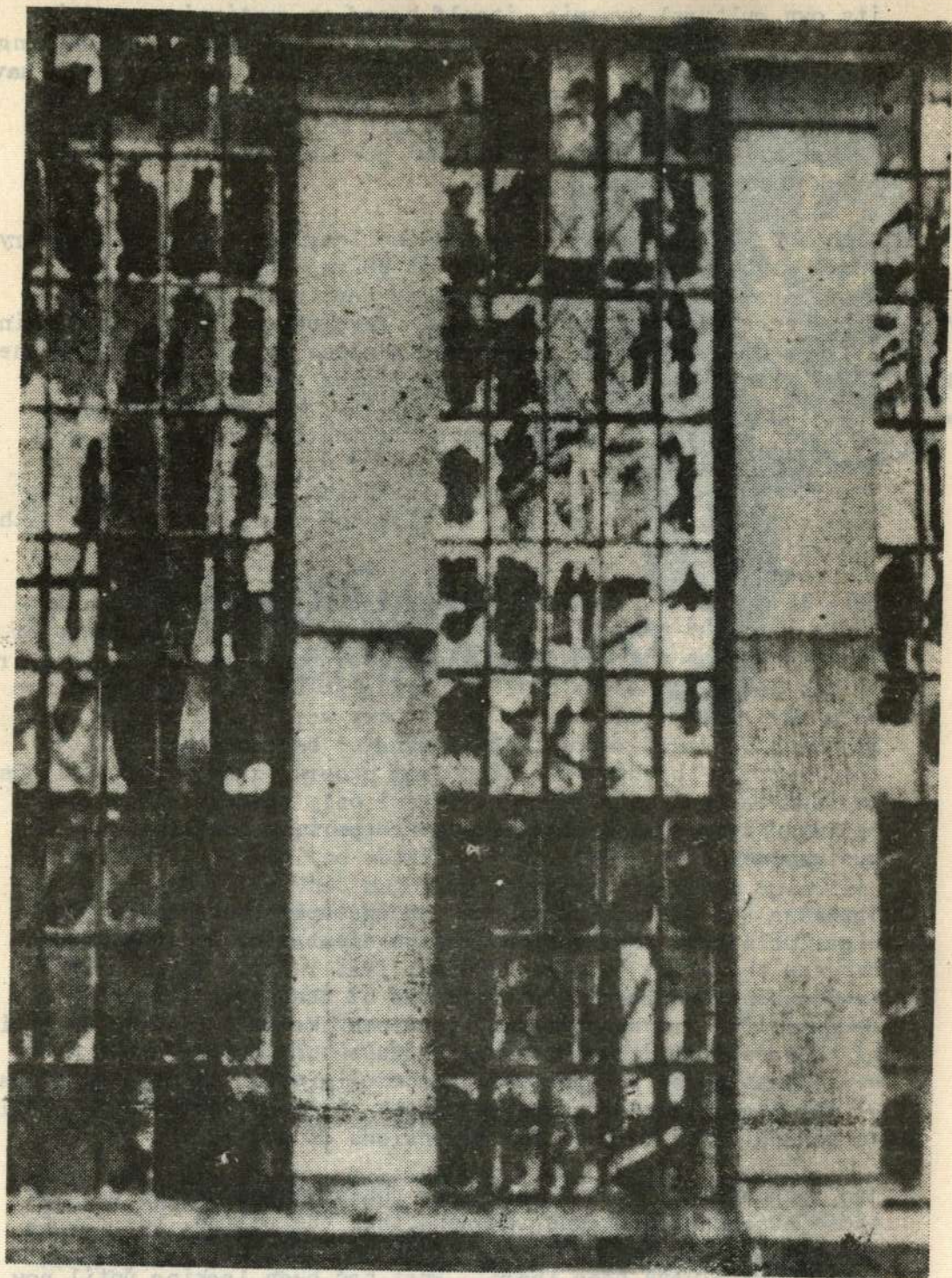
Although the criminal fraternity is clearly not a revolutionary force at the moment neither can it be rejected as just an apolitical reflection of present-day capitalist society, whose experiences are relevant to the revolution. There are within it possibilities of it developing a close relationship with the revolutionary left. These possibilities stem from its basic position within the present set-up; its very existence poses a threat to, and is a denigration of the ideology of the work (exploitation) ethic and the ethic of exchange value; it is committed to an ongoing struggle with the Law and its Agents, and to maintaining its refusal to play the co-operative game with the ruling class.

This is not to say that behind the facade of every criminal there lies the soul of a revolutionary. Clearly such gangster businessmen as the Krays and the Richardsons are closer in spirit to the Kabinet and its business associates. But these men are very much exceptions to the rule; they were hated by the vast majority of 'self-respecting criminals' because they built their empire through extortion from others' successful pullings and maintained their reign of terror only through close co-operation with 'respectable' bent coppers, politicians and businessmen.

Ignoring the distortion of the outlaw capitalist, there remain clear political implications in the escalating confrontation between the state and the criminal fraternity. This confrontation has come largely as a result of the state's initiative. Because it fears that 'crime' may soon threaten the whole fabric of their system, the state has begun to hit out far more heavily at those it considers to be criminals. In the dealings of the pigs, in the courts and in the prisons, this confrontation is beginning to take on the dimensions of a war.

The response has been a gathering cohesiveness on the part of those attacked; the consciousness that the police, the courts and the prisons are only corrupt agents of those who have the power, has always been there. What has been lacking until now has been an organised reply. This reply may not come until





**A PRISONER** stands behind a window at Mountjoy Prison. Almost every pane is shattered. Later came the CS gas. UPI by Wire



there has evolved a much closer relationship with the revolutionary left. But with the success of the numerous sit--down strikes which have taken, and **continue** to take, place in many prisons (all of which occurred without the guidance of the organised left), it looks as though 'criminals' are moving towards a consciousness of collective solidarity which, although focused in the prisons at the moment, may spread back to the ghettos and give the 'war against crime' an important political dimension.

The arrival on the scene of the Angry Brigade 'criminals' and the SWP maoist bank-robbers, makes it even more urgent that the left revises its attitude towards criminality. Until very recently, this attitude has been distorted by the sweet--sided benevolence of class justice. Smooth talking middle class accents have usually meant that the demonstrator and the dope-head (the lefts' principle contact with the law) have only collected fines, suspended sentences and probation. Borstal, detention centre and prison are almost always reserved for the working class people who get captured by the law.

Times are changing. The politicians and the freaks are now recognised as a 'danger to society' in their own right, and the jail sentences are rolling out. Over the past few years, they have tried to work out new ways of living and working together. This has focused in collectives which themselves usually reject the work ethic on the basis that if we are conspiring to overthrow the state, we might as well refuse to permit the state to exploit us for half our active lives. And despite the **impact** of the claimant's unions, the S.S. officers take none too kindly to this refusal, and consequently make it as difficult as possible to extract the pittance which the warfare state is supposed to provide. The rejection of the work ethic means the acceptance of criminality as a means of survival.

Because the state is fast moving to the point where all effective opposition -even defensive- is made illegal, militants in every field of struggle have no choice but to continue their political work outside of the law. The Tories are going to try to legislate class struggle out of existence, and from now on, the fight for better wages and conditions is by definition illegal. Yesterday's trade unionists become today's guerrillas, learning to organise their struggle clandestinely and in such a way that individuals cannot be singled out and smashed. Our fight is against the law, and to do that, we must learn underground methods.



Attacks on all sections of our movement have been increasing. All over the country, police have been moving into S.S. offices and ejecting and arresting Claimants Union members in a clear attempt to prevent further organisational development. The last few major demonstrations (Ireland and Rhodesia) were met with a very clear message; clear the streets or get your head busted - a threat which carried out in both cases. The number of police raids on the homes of active politicians has increased dramatically, supposedly on the pretext of bomb 'outrages' but clearly **with** the intention of gathering as much information for filing and cross-referencing in the state's computers (internment is only 500 miles away). The left becomes defined as 'criminal', and a relationship is formed with the 'criminal' on a practical and political basis in which the criminal experiences the solidarity of other oppressed people, and the revolutionaries turn to crime to organise the resistance.

The law has made clear its intention to smash us. If we are to survive, we must begin to organise our lives so that the police find it much more difficult to gather information about us; about who we are, and who are our brothers and sisters.

To do this, we need to understand much more clearly the ways in which the police operate. This means firstly dispelling a number of myths about them. As yet, the police force is not well enough organised to spread an effective security umbrella over all areas of illegal activity. It is open to question whether they can ever do this; at the moment, they are undermanned to the tune of 6,000 in London alone. (A coppers job is not a very popular one) Neither do they seem to have accumulated all the technical paraphanelia which goes with the American pig. The myth of the super-refined S.B. men running around placing bugging devices in every home, and beepers on every car, is an illusion which needs to be dispelled. It doesn't mean that to be safe, you have to remain shivering in a corner, afraid to move or say anything. Also, they don't seem to have been able to infiltrate to any significant degree the politically active groups, though clearly they are going to attempt to do this more and more.

What this means is that as long as we organise our lives with sufficient care and patience, there is ample space in which to operate illegally without having the law continually on our backs.



However, this awareness doesn't mean that we should dismiss the police as a bunch of buffoons whose existence can be ignored. They have four main assets which cannot be over-rated.

I) Storage of information. Every bit of information that they get their hands on they can store forever, and it can always be easily accessible to them. They can slowly gather details about particular friendship networks which in time might become very significant. Past relationships -who knew who, and what so-and-so was doing at such-and such a time may be a meaningless piece of information at the time it is given, but may be crucial to them months later. There is little we can do about the information they have already got; the damage has been done, and all we can do is await the day when we can smash their computers and burn their records. All that we can do now is to ensure that as little information gets through to them as possible. The pig is the enemy; let him know nothing, and never, never assume that he 'knows it all anyway' because he doesn't.

II) Jigsaw Puzzle Experts. This follows on from above. The police are constantly receiving details of various 'crimes' committed. They are able to build up patterns around these details, the links between them, and the likelihood of different crimes coming from a similar source. They need know nothing about who is involved, and yet gain an extraordinary amount of knowledge about what is happening. Then someone makes a slip somewhere and a wedge is driven into the information gap: someone is 'in it' and all the details about his associations can be very quickly fitted into an apparently solid prosecution case. The arrests follow. It is always a good idea not to fall into a predictable pattern of criminal activity, particularly if it looks as though it is an easy number -that is where most of the mistakes are made. Remember, variety is the spice of criminal **abundance** and the more we are able to practice mobility within illegal activities, so the more confusing shall be the details that the jigsaw experts puzzle over. This whole area of detection is crucial. Far too often, people think in terms of doing a job, and if they get away with it, fine; if you have not been arrested on the spot then it is O.K. to pull the same job again. This is an illusion that the pigs really prosper on.

III) Power of numbers. Once the police have selected their victims then they are in an immensely superior position. The door caves in with maybe two people behind it, and then



there's twenty pigs around them. At the moment, we have neither the intelligence system to get forwarning of forthcoming arrests, neither have we the organizational strength (except in a few situations -i.e. demoes) to think in terms of effectively resisting arrest. Again, the only way it seems possible to deal with this at the moment is through mobility; of not staying long in one particular pad and of getting to know as many places to stay as possible. Then there is more chance that information will filter through that the pig is looking for particular people before the pig manages to capture those particular people. Certainly, if this kind of mobility was practiced on a large scale then it would make things much more difficult for them. In Belfast, it is the constant mobility of people on the run (sleeping in a different place each night) which has perhaps been the most important factor in the survival of the insurrectionary movement.

1V) Our fear of the Pigs. The basic power of the police depends on the myth that they are everywhere and know everything, and it is the acceptance of this myth on the part of those they are attacking which is perhaps their greatest asset. It is only experience which will teach us the basic fallacy of this myth.





To counter these particular pig assets, there are certain basic precautions which we can take which in themselves are very simple, yet if they were followed by everyone who was conscious that the pig is the enemy, it would make their job impossible.

These precautions apply just as much to those who consider that the police have no reason to be interested in them. The police anyhow operate on the basis of arresting and charging on suspicion, and then fitting up the 'evidence' later. Bits and pieces of information that they have picked up in their raids can be fitted in with verbal by a skilful police scripwriter to make an apparent cast-iron case. The less information that they pick up, then the more difficult it is for them to do this. Furthermore, it is clear that the state is going to get a lot heavier in the coming years. The screws are gradually being tightened - particularly in the fields of restrictive legislation and in the administration of 'justice' - and there is no reason to suppose that it is going to stop here. In fact, certainly historical precedent would suggest the opposite; that repression will become far more widespread and vicious and two sides will become much more clearly defined. Those who thought previously that they could remain safely on the fence and be open about themselves to various agencies of





the state, may have some cause for regret when the jackboot comes kicking down their doors.

1) Use of Phones. It would seem best to avoid using phones as much as possible. It is almost impossible to establish that a phone is not being tapped, and even the most ordinary of phone conversations can tell a pig an awful lot. Coded phone calls -unless they are very well worked out- usually only suggest to them that there is something going on which they are not supposed to know about, and it is best not to let them know even this. Furthermore, the logging of phone calls which pass through the SDT system will soon be all computerised and this means that all phone calls, where they came from and where they were going to, will be recorded. They will be able to push a button and get instant information on friendship patterns. The only way it would seem that we can prevent this is to use the phone as infrequently as possible. The only phone call system which still seems cool to use is the call box to call box system (i.e. prearranging the call box number and the time to call.)

11) Shutting Your Mouth. All too often, people get to blabbing to an audience about what they know about so-and-so, purely on an ego-trip basis. This happens in reverse too, with people being asked questions ('is he/she involved in such-and-such?') which only serve the purpose of spreading information which helps nobody but the pigs. We've got to keep information to ourselves and only pass it on when it is vital to do so, and at the same time, we have to learn to trust others to tell us only when it becomes necessary. We've also got to learn to close our ears to things we don't think we need know about, and learn to tell others to shut-up when we feel their telling too much.

iii) Police Interrogation. It is through the interrogation of those busted that the police still probably pick up most of their information. For those who have not experienced this, it is difficult to imagine how difficult it is not to slip into some kind of dialogue with them. Time and time again, detainees have begun an interrogation with the intention of saying nothing, and have been talked into talking; it seems easier at the time, yet it always turns out for the worse. Pigs always like to put across the illusion that they know much more than they do, and lull people into thinking that it doesn't matter what they say since the pigs already know. DON'T BE FOOLED BY THIS. It is almost always better to put across the fact that you know you don't have to say anything, and then refuse





to answer any questions. They may threaten you that refusal to talk will only mean that you'll get it worse, they may offer to do you a favour and make sure you get a light sentence, but this is always bullshit. Stare at the wall, play with a pencil, but never get drawn into the conversation game. This goes particularly for those who actually don't know anything and who are asked particular questions about their friends. They may allow details to fall into the pigs hands which they themselves think is totally useless, but which for the pigs, is absolutely vital. Careless talk costs lives!

1V) Goods and Chattels. It is always a good idea to keep the place clean of anything incriminating; the dope, the stolen notepaper -they'll bust you for anything- and in fact, anything which might help them to get a clearer picture of what is happening. Address books just shouldn't exist -except in the head- as they provide the pigs with a goldmine of info. It is useful to know people who live in a very cool place who are willing to look after stuff for you. This whole aspect of security has become pretty crucial over the past few years since the political police have made it their business to rip of all written material they discover on each raid.



## UNDERGROUND

Any revolutionary movement knows that its success depends on the successful organisation of an underground which can protect people and materials from pig hands. This has involved the getting together of a whole lot of false documents, disguises, cars, rented flats whose tenants are untraceable; of the building up of a series of contacts where individuals take on specific tasks separately in such a way that if anyone falls into the hands of the pigs, then they get no further. It is only with a network which is well organised and **impenetrable**, to the pigs that the numerous brothers and sisters in prison or on the run can receive assistance and protection; that a strategy of creating pig confusion (this exists here only on a very primitive level at the moment) by feeding them false information and carrying out actions which only serve to bewilder them; and finally, that effective resistance to increasing state repression can be organised.







